

What you should know about General Radio Service

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(Citizens Band-CB)



Department of Communications

Ministère des Communications

General Radio Service, called Citizens Band (CB) in the United States, is becoming an increasingly popular means of communications. Thousands of Canadians now own GRS radios and use them regularly for many communications purposes.

This pamphlet has been prepared in order that you and others can get the best use from General Radio Service (GRS) and contains useful information, especially if you are considering buying or operating a two-way GRS radio.

What is GRS used for?

GRS is classed as a two-way radio communications service for personal or private business use. Its range is usually from two to 15 miles (three to 24 kilometres) depending on conditions and terrain. Within that range, you can communicate with any other licensed GRS station.

There are many uses of GRS radio. For example, truckers will often exchange information about highway or travel conditions. A commuter with a GRS set installed in his car is able to communicate with his or her family at home. As can be expected, one of the most valuable uses of GRS is to call for assistance or to pass along urgent information.

General Radio Service, as a separate class of radio communications service, was first introduced in Canada in 1962 and a year later, there were 13,500 Canadian GRS licences. Today, the figure is more than 200,000 and growing faster every day.

General Radio Service equipment can be classed as either land stations (meaning those which are fixed in one location) or mobile stations (such as those installed in cars, boats or aircraft).

A service to be shared

To communicate by radio, we use a natural resource—the radio frequency spectrum. GRS, like any other radio service, uses a part of the radio frequency spectrum. Some GRS sets are equipped for 22 channels only, but 40 channel radios are available as of April 1, 1977. This permits up to 40 separate conversations to take place at the same time. The channels are in the 27 megahertz (MHz) frequency band.

Only a limited number of people can use the radio spectrum at any one time and its use must therefore be shared. This is the main reason why the Department of Communications requires GRS equipment to be type approved and licensed, and establishes regulations governing its use.

Remember that whenever you operate your GRS equipment, you are sharing radio frequencies with perhaps hundreds of other users in your area. If you occupy a channel too long or use it improperly you deprive others from using it.

Buying your GRS equipment

Your GRS equipment must be type approved for use in Canada by the federal Department of Communications. Each type-approved unit should have a label or other marking bearing the Department of Communications type-approved number permanently attached to the chassis. Equipment purchased in the United States may not be licensable so be sure it wears the Canadian type-approval marking. If you are not sure that the equipment you intend to buy is type-approved for use in Canada, obtain an assurance from the dealer or manufacturer.

Obtaining your licence

Your GRS equipment must be licensed by the federal Department of Communications before you can operate it. The only exception to the licensing requirement are low-power portable walkie-talkies (operating at less than 100 milliwatts input power to the final transmitter amplifier stage).

Obtaining your licence is easy. Any Canadian citizen or landed immigrant aged 16 and over can get one. The current procedure is as follows:

- 1.—Write, telephone or go to your nearest federal Department of Communications district office and ask for a GRS licence application form.

2.—Fill out the form carefully. Delays in obtaining licences often occur because applicants have failed to provide all the necessary information on the application form. As well as listing your name, address and nationality on the form, you must also provide the make, model number and the Department of Communications type approval number of your radio equipment. No licence examination is required.

3.—Send or bring the completed form back to the department with a certified cheque or money order made out to the Receiver General of Canada to cover the licence fee of \$13.50. You may pay cash if you come in person, but do not send cash through the mail.

If your GRS licence application is properly completed, you should receive your licence within a few weeks. Licences are valid for up to three years. Licensees are asked to forward any change of address to the issuing district office.

Setting up your station

To get the most from your equipment, it should be properly installed and maintained. Ensure that all connections are secure, that line impedances are matched, and that the equipment is well grounded. Connections exposed to the weather should be water tight. The height of your GRS antenna can not exceed 75 feet (23 metres) and may be restricted to a lower height near airports. A properly installed station is less likely to cause interference to other radio or television receivers in the area.

Tips for greater GRS enjoyment

With the growing popularity and use of GRS, the channels are becoming increasingly crowded, especially in and around urban areas. It is important to remember that you are sharing the frequency with many other users.

You can help ensure that everyone gets the best use out of GRS by observing the regulations and by exercising common courtesy.

Don't be an airwave hog

Keep your conversations brief and to the point. If you must communicate for a long period of time, regulations require that you break after each five minutes for at least two minutes or until the channel is again available. This will allow other persons, who may be waiting to use the channel, to have their turn.

Watch your language

GRS is publicly accessible. Many ears may be listening. Abusive language or swearing, as well as being strictly prohibited, does little for your reputation, and may cost you your licence.

Identify yourself

The regulations governing the use of GRS require that at the beginning and end of each conversation, you identify yourself by your call sign which you obtain with your licence. This is an important regulation since you may be causing interference to TV or other radio reception, or be on the receiving end of interference. Without adequate identification, the task of locating an interfering transmitter, correcting the problem and helping you get better service is made more difficult.

Power limitations

GRS is designed for short-range communications and Canadian type-approved equipment meets the legal power limitations established for the service. The addition of any radio frequency amplifying device that makes it possible for GRS equipment to exceed these legal power limitations is prohibited and is a serious offence.

Keep Channel 9 clear

Channel 9 (27.065 MHz) is reserved for emergency use or for establishing contact with another station. Even if all other channels are occupied, do not use Channel 9 for ordinary communication. For someone, it could mean a matter of considerable urgency.

We listen

The Department of Communications monitors GRS radio communications to ensure that stations are transmitting on frequency and that users are observing the regulations. If a station is found to be operating improperly, an infringement report is sent to the licensee. Should you receive such a report, correct the fault at once and advise the department. Repeated infringement may result in a cancellation of the licence.

Further reading

This pamphlet is only intended as a brief introduction. We recommend that you pick up a copy of the General Radio Service handbook, available for 75 cents from DSS Printing and Publishing Branch, Mail Order Service, 270 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9. It contains a wealth of information for GRS users. Also, read and retain a copy of the General Radio Regulations part II, available from the above location. We also suggest that you consider joining a GRS club in your area. It is one good way to learn more about the service.

Any questions? Contact us.

If you have questions concerning GRS (or CB) communications, contact the Telecommunication Regulatory Service, Department of Communications, Ottawa, or any one of the district offices listed below. We'll try to help.

Department of Communications district offices:

Newfoundland

ST. JOHN'S, NF
P.O. Box 572
A2H 6G1

ST. JOHN'S, NF
P.O. Box 5273
A1C 5W1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
CHARLOTTETOWN, PE
180 Kent Street
C1A 1N7

NOVA SCOTIA
HALIFAX, NS
6009 Quinpool Road
B3K 5J7

SYDNEY, NS
503 King's Road
B1S 1B2

NEW BRUNSWICK
RATHTREVILLE, NB
P.O. Box 105
E2A 3Z1

MONTREAL, QUEBEC
2005 Union Street
H3C 2C0

QUEBEC, QUEBEC
2 Place Québec
G1R 2B5

SAULT STE. MARIE, ONTARIO
119 Main Street
P6A 1A1

THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO
23 Court Street South
P1B 2W6

WINNIPEG, MAN.
2000-Dale Lombard Avenue
R3B 2C9

KINGSTON, ONTARIO
P.O. Box 630
K7L 4K1

LONDON, ONTARIO
43 Talbot Street
N6A 5C9

OTTAWA, ONTARIO
472 Albert Street
K1R 5B4

TORONTO, ONTARIO
35 Queen Avenue East
M4M 1M2

WINDSOR, ONTARIO
890 Ouellette Street
N8A 1C7

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Foothills Shopping Plaza
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20 Duke Street West
N2M 1X3

NORTH BAY, ONTARIO
P.O. Box 596
P1B 4A5

SAINTE-MARIE, ONTARIO
119 Main Street
P6A 1A1

VANCOUVER, B.C.
105 Granville Street, Room 3400
V6C 5S5

Winnipeg, MAN.
477 Thompson Drive
R3B 1G6

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V1G 1B6

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EDMONTON, ALBERTA
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T5J 2B4

REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN
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S4P 2C4

WILLISTON, N.D.
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ND3 1H6

YUKON TERRITORIES
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